

A COMPLETE STORY EVERY SATURDAY

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FICTION SECTION

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SECTION TWO.

WEDDING CAKE AD LIB.

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A Woman's Deception That Gave Distinction to a Party and Helped a Second Love Affair.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

TEMPLE, expert in domestic camouflage who concocted the plot of the deceptive thing around which the plot of the story revolves.

MISS KATHY, who tells the story and really might be called the heroine too.

LETTIE, who is Kathy's sister, and is getting married.

EDGAR SPARTHWAITE, rich and a navy officer, the bridegroom.

EDITH, a younger sister of Lettie and Kathy, something of a mischief-maker.

MOTHER, who doesn't care much about expense so long as the effect is achieved.

DR. BLAINE, who is best man in the wedding and also in the whole story.

MISS BENDA SPARTHWAITE, one of the bridegroom's relatives, a natural born maker of suggestions.

I was Temple who concocted the diabolical plot, but of course I was the chief sufferer from it.

Oh, I was accomplice to the crime, if you like, and a willing one at that. I would have done anything to save a dollar that week—anything at all. Looking at it in that light the plan seemed perfectly good to me.

We were making Lettie's wedding cake when the great idea was evolved. Temple was simply groaning as she looked at the dozens of eggs and the pounds of sugar, the raisins and butter and cream and flour. "There's just seven dollars worth of stuff here, at most," she kept saying gloomily.

I stood her saying it three or four times, and at last I got desperate. "But it can't be helped, Temple," I said. "Lettie wants the big frosted cake for the centre of the table, and then she must have the other cake to eat up and put into the boxes. She'll carry on like mad if we don't do as she likes. You know how she is. And I'm so thankful to have her married that a few dollars more or less on the cake can't make much difference."

"It'll make a difference when the bill from the grocer comes in," said Temple. "We'll have to eat mush and milk for supper all year long."

Just then Edith poked her head in at the door. "Oh, I say, wedding cake!" she exclaimed. "Give me some raisins."

"Go to Halifax," snorted Temple. "We've troubles enough without you hanging around the kitchen."

Edith is at the perfectly unsqueamishable age of fourteen. Of course she came right in and seized a handful of raisins. "Gee, I'm glad Lettie's getting married," she said, with her mouth full. "And Edgar's got plenty of money, too. Maybe she'll give me some of her old frocks now instead of my having to do without so's she can buy new ones. It's fierce to have a beauty in the family."

"Don't say 'fierce' and 'gee,' and don't speculate on Lettie's giving away anything," I admonished, knowing my duty as older sister.

"That's right," put in Temple. "For all Miss Lettie's sweet little face and big blue baby eyes, she's not what you can call free-handed, to be sure."

"Still, when she's gone I'll miss the excitement," said Edith, "and all her suitors sending flowers and candy. I did love those marrons Klein sent. You never have any suitors, Kathy. You're not bad-looking, either; but, of course, Lettie fades out everybody."

She snatched another handful of raisins and fled. Temple and I looked at each other and laughed. There was no suppressing Edith, and we knew it; and besides, everything she said was true. I never did have any suitors, and

any man showed the slightest symptom of being interested in me, Lettie promptly smiled at him, and he forgot I was in existence. It wasn't all Lettie's fault, and she never realized how selfish she was; but she was one of those girls who can't be happy unless the whole universe revolves right

around them. And since she was a beauty, and mother felt sure she'd marry well, she'd had the frocks and the visits and the fun, and the rest of us had given in and let her take it. Her engagement to Edgar Sparthwaite—one of the Providence Sparthwaites, rich as double cream, and a

navy officer to boot—pleased mother almost to pieces, and that was why we were engaged in this last grand effort of giving her a wedding which would be commensurate with all she hadn't had in the past and all she would have in the future. But with our income cut down one-half from



I GAVE A REGULAR INDIAN YELL AND FLUNG MYSELF FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM OF THE VERANDA STEPS.

the war, and the cost of living doubled, it wasn't an easy matter to manage that wedding. Mother had left it up to Tempie and me, and though Tempie's only a servant, she's been with us so long, she's just like one of the family; and though I'm only nineteen, which is three years younger than Lettie and five older than Edith, I'm a first-rate little manageress, if I do say it myself, and can make a nickel spread over a dime's worth of value pretty nearly always. There are almost no economy dodges I don't know, from drippings to dyed lingerie ribbons.

But this time Tempie certainly did think of a new one. She kept looking at the eggs—eggs were 85 cents a dozen—and the butter—butter was 75 cents a pound—and at the great big pan we had to make the round cake in, and she mourned. At last she edged up to me and spoke low.

"Say, Miss Kathy," she began, "I'm thinking"—

I stopped chopping raisins and citron and waited. She had the light of battle in her eye.

"Miss Lettie only wants the big cake for ornamint like—isn't that so?"

"I've told you a thousand times," I said wearily, "that it's to be in the centre of the refreshment table, in Grandmother Gainsley's old silver tray. And you know you're to cover it with one of your marvellous hard white frostings, with all the fancy stuff and curlicues that it could possibly have if it came from Trazzini's." (Trazzini being our very best caterer.)

Tempie took the big pan and turned it upside down, meditatively.

"Look here," she said. "What if I was to take this pan, now, upside down, just like the cake will be when we turn it out, and cover the pan with my icing, and dress it up with all the curlicues and fancy doddles and all—wouldn't it look just like a real cake, and wouldn't it do just as well for a centrepiece, and wouldn't it save us two dozen eggs and all that sugar and butter—enough eggs for your ma's and Miss Lettie's breakfasts for a week? Ain't that a grand idea, Miss Kathy, dear? And we'd make the other cake and cut it up and put it in the little silver and white boxes and give them to the guests, and devil a soul will know the differ but you and me. What d'ye say now? 'Twould be saving a dollar sixty in eggs alone—and the butter!"

NOBODY but those who have had to scrape and pinch the way Tempie and I've had to do will appreciate what a temptation it was. I'd been perfectly sick thinking about the bills that would be coming in the first of the month. Lettie hadn't spared money on her trousseau, and mother'd had a new dress, and Edith and I had to have new ones, too, because we were to be bridesmaids; and though I'd made them myself, and they were only organdie, they'd required new slippers and silk stockings and hats—I'm not fool enough to try to make hats for an occasion like this. I know it was going to take a year's hard times to get us back to normal again. Mother can't understand about bills. She always thinks shopkeepers ought to be glad to supply us with things because we're such nice people and had such wonderful ancestors.

As for this wedding breakfast spread of Lettie's—that had been almost the last straw. She and mother had wanted to hand it all over to Trazzini, which meant that we'd have another bill of about \$500, for it was going to be a proud, splurgy affair. I can tell you. Our big old house and our garden are just fine as a background for parties—I often wish they weren't when I see the bills for chickens and finger-rolls and ice cream. I'd made Lettie agree to be married in the garden, pointing out to her tactfully that she was one of the few girls whose complexion could stand exposure to sunlight, and also that our Baltimore Belle rose vine over the arbor—we call it a pergola now—would be in full bloom, and she and Edgar and the rector could stand before it. The real reason I wanted a garden wedding was because it would save money in house decorations. Our house is pretty shabby and takes a lot of fixing to hide it. I'd been praying every night for six weeks that the weather would be good, for I meant to have the wedding spread served in the garden, too. Which brings me right back to food again.

Tempie and I had gone over every item, and we knew that we could make the jellied bouillon and the sandwiches and the salad and the patties, all by ourselves, at about one-tenth the cost of Trazzini. The ices we'd buy, but little cakes to serve with them and the wedding cake and coffee and claret cup we'd make. We had it all figured out

to the last centime, I can tell you, and even so it ran to a fearful sum of money. So when Tempie suggested this perfectly simple way of saving several dollars, do you wonder that I looked upon it with a kindly eye?

"Nobody'll ever know but you and me," she repeated. "After Miss Lettie's married and gone, who's to look after the remnants of the wedding feast but you and me, Miss Kathy? We'll melt down the sugar icing off the pan and use it for pudding sauce, too. Oh, there won't be a thing wasted, whereas if we have a great iced cake to be eaten up it'll last forever and be bad for yours and Miss Edith's stummicks. Your ma won't touch it, as you know, for fear it'd fatten her up. What do y' falter for? It's the grandest scheme I ever had, I'm sure. Look at them eggs—and that butter! It's a crime to be wasting it, to say nothing of the expense."

I LOOKED at the butter and eggs, and I looked at the pan, and I wondered. If anything should happen that it would be found out, Lettie and mother would never forgive me, and, indeed, I wouldn't forgive myself. I wasn't going to have our family made ridiculous before the Sparthwaites and their set, as well as all the other people Lettie had asked. It would be a wonderful tidbit for the society papers—they'd already been rather catty about the daughter of the shabby genteel family who'd managed to land a Sparthwaite. "But if anybody should lift the tray, Tempie—it'll be so much lighter than

You can have some of 'em in the mush when it gets too tiresome."

It was all just as simple as that. I will say for Tempie that she kept her word. We went ahead and baked the cake that was to be cut up, and it came out fine. I was sort of afraid Edith might be poking around again, and I knew she'd notice that we hadn't baked the round cake, but luckily she stayed away. As for Lettie and mother, they never come into the kitchen. All Lettie said was, in that sweet dependent way of hers, just a few days before the wedding: "Kathy, dear, are you sure everything's going to be all right?"

"If we only have good weather," I told her, "there isn't anything that can go wrong."

"Edgar says his best man is so anxious to meet you," went on Lettie. She was trying on one of her trousseau gowns—a little blue and white dimity—and she looked like a garden party angel in it.

"Oh, that nice Dr. Blaine we met at Narragansett," said mother, who was sitting by to help. "A charming man, quite delightfully brusque—and with a black mustache. Why is it so many brusque men have black mustaches? The two almost always go together."

I collapsed on the bed. I was tired. Tempie and I had cleaned all the silver that day. Charming men, with or without black mustaches, were nothing to me at that moment. All I wanted in the world was to get that wedding over without a hitch.

Lettie had forgotten about Dr. Blaine by this time and gone back to thoughts of the wedding. "I do hope

sight of Tempie's and my wedding cake scheme, but Lettie's word brought it back, and I had a shiver of premonition. However, I knew there was plenty of the other cake to give her a piece of it, and she hadn't said anything about the round one. It seemed safe enough, but oh, my guilty conscience troubled me about the sham. I had—if mother will permit me to use one more scrap of vulgar slang—I had a hunch.

"I'll see that you get a piece, all right," I promised. "and now I'm going off to bed, for I've got to be up early to-morrow and begin to get the house cleaned. Please don't be around more than you can help. Tempie and I are going to sweep, scrub and polish the furniture."

Lettie came over and gave me a fond good-night kiss. "Little sister," she murmured, "you're so good—and so wonderful. What would I do without you?"

What, indeed, I wondered myself.

THE day before the wedding, in the afternoon, Tempie and I locked ourselves in the pantry, drew down the blinds and lit the electric light. I went to work cutting the cake, and she draped that old tin pan in the most marvellous coating of icing you ever saw. It was like snow and hoarfrost. Delicate flutings ran over its top, drawn into a delicious swirl in the centre. Exquisite little shells were placed all round the edge. It wasn't overdone, either. It was just right, and when Tempie had finished it was a regular fairy cake—provided, of course, fairies are the size of broodings and eat cake. I could hardly get my own work done for watching. It really was a masterpiece.

Somehow, I hardly know how, we got the lovely thing off the pastry board and onto the beautiful old silver tray that is the choicest piece of all the old Gainsley silver.

"When that gets a wreath of roses round it," said Tempie proudly, "there's no one but will admire it as much as you and I, Miss Kathy. And all I hope is that the next one I ice will be for your wedding, with a grand, fine young man as wealthy and as handsome as this Lieut. Sparthwaite, or even more so."

"Well, I'm not going to have a fake cake. I'll tell you that," I declared.

"It'll be the real thing or none."

"And well said," exclaimed Tempie.

"There's naught of the fake about you, Miss Kathy."

But as I looked at the beautiful deception I was helping to practise on my own sister, I wasn't so sure.

I WOKE up early, early in the morning, and before I was even half awake I listened to hear if it was raining. It wasn't. So I struggled slowly out of bed and went over to the window, half afraid to look out, for even if it wasn't raining it might be cloudy. But no, if ever there was a summer dawn that looked like the real thing, it was Lettie's wedding morning. The sky was that wonderful clear, still gray-blue that means sunshine all day long.

"Thank heaven for that," I said, and proceeded to hop into my clothes and hustle down to the kitchen. Two of Lettie's bridesmaids and five of Edgar's distinguished friends were staying in the house, and that means breakfast trays.

Early as I was, Tempie was before me, and we hustled round like mad, keeping as still as possible so that none of our guests would hear us and wake. We leaped at the downstairs part of the house and cleaned it sublimely. Then, while she got the trays ready, I cut bushels and bushels of flowers. I always arrange them on the back porch, and there I was snapping stems and pouring water behind a barricade of vases and bowls and jugs and great heaps of roses and larkspur and honeysuckle, when I heard someone walking through the dining-room. I looked round, and there was Dr. Blaine, Edgar's best man, black mustache, brusque manners and all. I'd met him the night before, but hadn't a chance to speak to him—indeed, I'd hardly looked at him. I was none too glad to see him this morning, for I was wearing a very dirty pink bungalow apron and a pair of old white pumps that were a disgrace.

"I'm so sorry you woke so early," I said, "for in half an hour you'd have had your breakfast tray, all comfortably in your room."

"I always get up early, and I'll slip over to the Inn for breakfast. That'll be one burden off your shoulders. Can I help you with these flowers?"

I hate to be helped with flowers, and I suppose I looked it.

"Oh, I can arrange them just as nicely as you can," he said. "I've lived in Japan and studied the native method. It has many superiorities over ours."

"Maybe it has," I agreed. "But I'm afraid I can't change my whole scheme of decoration even so." And then I was ashamed of being so rude, and I relented. "If you'll put those pink roses in those blue and white china jars, it would be a help."

He didn't say another word, but fell to work, and really he arranged them beautifully with his square blunt-



SHE DRAPED THAT OLD TIN PAN IN THE MOST WONDERFUL COATING OF ICING YOU EVER SAW.

a real cake," I objected weakly.

"Now, don't be foolish, Miss Kathy," said Tempie, with contempt. "Who is there that goes about at weddings lifting up the fancy dishes? If that worries you, I can slip a brick under the pan."

"All right," I said at last. "Let's do it, Tempie. But don't breathe it to a soul. It's our secret—yours and mine. If Edith finds it out we might as well publish it in the papers. And the waitresses we have in for the reception mustn't suspect, either."

"They won't come until after the table is all arranged," said Tempie. "As for Miss Edith—I'm going to put this cake when it's baked under lock and key, anyway, for it needs all of its two weeks' mellowing. Then, the day before the wedding, when you're cutting it up and putting it in the boxes I'll be busy putting the fine, thick, fancy icing on the pan."

She gathered up the eggs and butter we'd saved and carried them away. "There's enough here to last us right up till the day of the wedding if we're careful," she gloated, "and nothing more need be bought; and as for raisins, we'll now have a store to last till Christmas time or thereabouts."

the food isn't going to look homemade and stupid," she said, pulling at the dimity sash. "I can't see why I didn't have Trazzini, after all. I might have had Edgar pay for it afterward—without his knowing it, of course."

"Well," I fired up, "we're poor, Lettie, but before I'd see a sister of mine skin her husband out of the money to pay for her wedding breakfast, I'd work myself to shreds. Don't you worry about the food. It's going to be the best you ever ate, and it will look all right, too. Trazzini would be out of business if Tempie and I ever took up catering in a serious way, believe me."

"You use such vulgar slang, dear," said mother sweetly—just the way I talk to Edith. "'Skin' and 'believe me!' It really isn't done."

"I'm so glad I got those darling little boxes for the wedding cake," said Lettie, taking no notice either of mother or me. "When Tempie cuts it, do remember to bring me a little piece, Kath—I might forget to taste it on the day of the wedding, I have so much to think of, and I'd really like to have a bit of my own wedding cake."

I'd been so busy I'd almost lost

fingered surgeon's hands. We worked there quite comfortably, not talking at all, and presently Tempie, rushing out to bring me my coffee, was quite stunned to see him. He was at ease, though.

"I've helped you so much," he suggested, rather jocularly, I thought, "that you've certainly gained ten minutes of leisure. Can't you sit down here and drink your coffee; and, maybe, I can have a cup too?"

That seemed reasonable, so we sat down quite amicably, and Tempie brought us toast and coffee and a little pot of orange marmalade. Not as much as he'd had on his breakfast tray, but it was my breakfast, and since he'd offered to share it, he might take what he could get.

We had rather a nice little talk, too, mostly about Japan, and I was startled when I realized that our ten minutes had become twenty. I jumped up. "You must run along," I said. "This is my busy day."

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed. "Can't I do anything more to help?"

I KNEW mother would rage, and Lettie, too, but he looked so provokingly immaculate in his white flannels that I thought I'd take him at his word. So I let him carry in the flowers and place them as I directed, and then there was some furniture to be moved about, and then—well, I don't know—I simply went into a daze of activity. There were so many million things to do, and one of the extra maids we'd engaged for the day didn't come, and the others were stupid, and everything fell on Tempie and me. But white flannels or not, Dr. Blaine was a good sport. He lifted and fetched and carried and helped out wonderfully. Looking back, I don't see what we'd have done without him.

Somewhat, I don't know how, the breakfast trays were sent up, the place was got ready, the tables were set—we were going to serve the wedding breakfast à la buffet—the maids were put into their proper uniforms and caps and aprons and Tempie was left to be their general. All this time, of course, people had been coming and going, presents arriving—and the wedding bouquets—and the telephone ringing, but I kept everyone upstairs as much as possible, and almost before I knew it it was time for me to get into my bridesmaid's dress and to dress Edith and mother. I advised the doctor to go look after Edgar, and he left quite cheerfully.

"I feel as if I'd almost personally conducted this wedding," he said, as he went off.

I had to grin at that; and I saved it up to tell Tempie, and make her grin, too.

I HADN'T been a bit worried about the wedding cake—so far, or about anything. But there was one cousin of Edgar's, a Miss Brenda Sparthwaite, who presently began to get on my nerves, and finally she fretted me so that I drove her out of Lettie's room and made her take her fuss and feathers elsewhere. She was one of those silly, giggling girls (and she wasn't such a girl, either; she must have been thirty), all full of bright chatter and clever ideas that were about suited to the mentality of a five year old child. She got dressed early and she looked too absurd for anything in a little tipped down French hat and a very, very youthful frock, all frills and ribbons. And it was: "Oh, Lettie, dear, I'm sure the musicians have come—what music are you going to have them play first?" and "Oh, Lettie, aren't you just too excited?" and "Oh, Lettie" this and "Oh, Lettie" that, until I got wild. So I turned her out, and by dint of some concentrated effort I got Mother into her gray georgette and Edith into her organdie and floppy hat, and Lettie into her lovely trailing wedding dress and veil, and then I gave my hair one quick twist and leaped into my own frock, double-quick, and gave Edith the smelling salts and told her to take care of Lettie and Mother, and I just flew downstairs the back way and took a quick survey of everything.

And I must say it all looked wonderful, and Tempie winked at me to indicate that everything was going smoothly. I started the musicians playing, saw that the guests were properly shepherded into the garden, gave the ushers the silver ribbons that made the aisle for the procession, and went back upstairs. Edith was administering the salts alternately to Lettie and Mother, and both of them pretended to turn faint and cry when I told them the hour had come.

"Cheer up," I told Mother. "That old cat of a Mrs. Sparthwaite is just hoping you'll break down." And to Lettie, "You know you look fierce with your eyes red." And so I started them downstairs.

The other bridesmaids had gathered in the parlor, and I handed them out their baskets of flowers, gave Lettie her bouquet, ran the shade up and down as a signal to the musicians and fell into my place as I heard the "fa-ta-ta-ta" of the wedding march begin. I'd seen Edgar start under Doctor Blaine's protecting wing a couple of

minutes before, and he looked as white as his uniform.

Out into the hall we went, first the ushers, all in uniform, then the long double-line of orchid and pinky bridesmaids, and last of all, Lettie on Mother's arm, looking almost too lovely—across the veranda, slowly down the steps and out on the grass into the greenery of the old garden. The silver ribbons shone in the sunlight, and the guests stood all about, and the sky was blue and the flowers were in bloom—oh, it was all perfect, and just the way a garden wedding ought to be. We walked slowly down the garden to the pergola and there were the three men—Edgar and Doctor Blaine and the rector—and Edgar came a little forward and stood beside Lettie and looked at her as though he could eat her.

looked at the clock. I was beginning to wish that it was all over.

After the ices were served and the people had had more cups, they began drifting around the garden and laughing and joking and making toasts to the bride and all that sort of thing. Lettie and Edgar came out of the pergola and some of Edgar's brother-officers skittered about, and it was very gay and festive.

And then that impossible Brenda Sparthwaite took a hand. I was just coming from a glance at the clock for the third time and I heard her saying, oh, so playfully, with that determined kittenishness that so many ladies of her age acquire:

"And now, Lettie, darling, you must cut the bride's cake with your husband's sword—that's the one touch of pretty pageantry that will make the

she began to lower it, her little head tipped adorably and a sweet little serious look on her face, and then—

I gave a regular Indian yell and flung myself from the top to the bottom of the veranda steps.

I DON'T remember anything more until I woke with the most excruciating agony in my ankle and right wrist and only able to see from one eye because there was a bandage over the other. Doctor Blaine was bending over me and every time he touched my arm I groaned. It was broken—he was setting it. I realized that and I wanted to ask about it, but there was somethin' more important on my mind.

"Did Lettie cut that cake?" I asked—no, I demanded.

"She's delirious," said some one, tearfully. It sounded like Mother. But I didn't heed her.

"Answer me," I said. "Did Lettie cut that cake?" And 'toto my one eye, I threw a glare of command, I can tell you. Only there were involuntary tears running out of it, because my arm hurt so.

"No, she didn't," said Doctor Blaine.

"Then that's all right," I said, and proceeded to give my whole attention to crying with my good eye.

For I had twisted an ankle, broken my arm, and cut my head neatly open on one side, as I presently learned. And at first I'd been so stunned that they thought I'd killed myself. And the wedding party was all gone, Lettie and Edgar with many protests, to be sure, but Doctor Blaine had shooed them off and told them to run along and have their honeymoon and he'd take care of me.

After a while Tempie came sneaking in and we had a word or two. "I had to tell the Doctor, Miss Kathy," she confessed. "He wormed it out of me, for I was that excited right after the accident I said some things I didn't intend to. But no one else knows, I do assure you. And I just had the presence of mind to whisk the cake away and lock it up in the silver chest, where no one would get it, and me with the key. I knew what you were up to, me brave dear, when I heard you screech—and it wasn't a second too soon. Everybody thought you'd fainted, and it made quite a fine wind-up to the party, gave them all something to talk about more than they expected, you might say."

Well, that was one way to look at it, and as I got better I found out that Tempie was pretty near right. I was so dead tired too that it was a luxury for me to lie still, for all my aches and pains. But I did hate to have the doctor know it. He'd stayed on after the others had gone back to Providence. He said he might just as well spend his vacation seeing that his patient got proper attendance. He also said he never abandoned a case he'd begun.

H E came over a good bit and read to me and talked. He was brusque, but it wasn't a very bad brusqueness once I'd got used to him. And one day I was so well he carried me down into the garden, and when I came in sight of the pergola I knew I'd have to own up about the cake. I was just going to begin when he said something about it himself.

"You're an awful fraud, you know," he said. "When you fell down the steps there every one thought you'd fainted, but fainting young women don't give out war-whoops to advertise their intentions.

He looked at me and smiled, and I could see that he knew all, and, like the French proverb, he understood all, too.

"I had to do something," I murmured, meekly enough. "I wasn't going to let all those people see that Lettie's wedding cake was a sham, was it?"

He had put me down in a big cushioned chair and was sitting on the grass beside me. The bandage was off my head and I had on one of Lettie's old negligees, a pretty one, and I felt quite Lettie-ish, sitting out in the garden, with a young man in attendance.

"Wedding cakes are fool things," he said. "Ridiculous survival of a ridiculous old custom. Indigestible, too. All the same"—

He stopped and looked at me calmly, and, though it hadn't occurred to me before, I knew exactly what he was going to say.

"All the same," he went on, "just as soon as that arm of yours gets out of the sling and you can bear your weight on that bad ankle then, right away, I'm going to order you on a diet of wedding cake. It'll be yours and mine. I've already got Tempie engaged to make it."

He knelt beside me and put his cheek against my well cheek. He didn't look at all brusque now. I put my unbruised arm contentedly around his neck.

"Wedding cake's my favorite food," I said.

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WE HAD RATHER A NICE LITTLE TALK, TOO, MOSTLY ABOUT JAPAN.

And so they were married, and Mother behaved like a brick, and so did Edgar, not even fumbling the ring. As for Lettie, she is never confused when it isn't in the picture.

The instant the kissing and the congratulations and such began I dropped out of my place and hustled round to Tempie's side. Everything was ready to serve, and as I looked at the wedding cake, so imposing and so stately, so seemingly all solid and substantial, it reassured me.

Presently the maids began to bring round the little tables, and people settled themselves under the trees and the lawn umbrellas and all the nice shady spots, to eat. Edgar and Lettie and some of the relatives had a table under the pergola. I myself went about purring, for every one seemed to be having a good time, and most wedding receptions are as stiff as pokers. The serving went on without a hitch, and the way the food was devoured was proof of its quality.

Lettie and Edgar had to catch the early afternoon train, and she takes so much time to dress that I knew I'd have to keep an eye on the time. So I ran into the house now and then and

day complete. Such a dear, quaint custom!"

My heavens! I stopped cold, right on the edge of the veranda! The one touch of pretty pageantry, indeed! A dear, quaint custom! It would be a whole lot dearer and quainter than Miss Brenda imagined. And she is the sort who no sooner thinks of something than it must be done. She ran girlishly round to the refreshment table and summoned two or three of the men to carry the table with the cake on it out into the open, so that everyone could see. I saw Tempie making dramatic gestures, and then fall back stricken. She couldn't stop Miss Sparthwaite.

And there I stood, very little better than Tempie. I didn't know what to think and I didn't know what to do. I saw Lettie smiling sweetly up at Edgar, and he drawing out his sword with that fatuous smile of the bridegroom, and cautioning her not to cut herself. Slowly, very slowly, Lettie extended the sword over that whitened sepulchre of a cake—she did it slowly because she had such pretty hands and arms and she wasn't going to let the guests miss them—and slowly, slow-

NEXT SATURDAY'S COMPLETE STORY

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